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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 002294

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STATE FOR AF A/S FRAZER
NSC FOR COURVILLE AND SHORTLEY

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SUBJECT: SUDAN'S DARFUR CRISIS: MEETING WITH VICE
PRESIDENT TAH

Classified By: CDA Cameron Hume. Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. Summary. In a meeting with CDA Hume Vice President Taha insisted that he agreed with President Bashir's rejection of UN peace-keeping in Darfur. Although he is concerned that U.S./Sudanese relations may be about to worsen as a result, he did not offer any ideas for resolving the impasse. He did respond favorably to a suggestion that President Bashir consider declaring a military moratorium during the upcoming month of Ramadan, during which renewed efforts could be made to broaden support for the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). End Summary.

¶2. On September 19 CDA Hume, at his request, met with Vice President Taha. The meeting was one-on-one and lasted for 45 minutes. Hume asked if Taha had any ideas for overcoming the impasse over peace-keeping in Darfur. Taha said the meeting took place at a bad moment in U.S./Sudanese relations. The Sudanese government was unified in its rejection of UN peace-keeping in Darfur, and it did not accept that foreign governments knew best how to deal with the situation. Taha regretted the clash with the equally strong U.S. position in favor of UN peace-keeping, but he warned that the Sudanese position was firm. He did not offer any ideas for breaking the impasse.

¶3. Taha then reviewed his own position over previous months. He said he had been misunderstood during his March meeting in Brussels with Deputy Secretary Zoellick; although he had not ruled out UN peace-keeping, he had not suggested it was the right course. After the DPA was signed, the Sudanese government was taken aback when the international community rushed to insist on a UN peace-keeping operation, rather than work to consolidate support for the DPA. The Sudanese government was left on its own to confront non-signatories who stepped up armed attacks. In those circumstances it was natural for the Sudanese government to develop its own plan for security in Darfur and to put it into effect. Taha insisted he supported that plan fully.

¶4. Taha expanded on this position. He asserted that "all" Sudanese political forces were gradually coming around to the same position, and he cited a recent statement of former President Saddiq Al Mahdi qualifying his earlier support for UN peace-keeping. (Taha ignored contrary positions taken by Vice President Salva Kiir, by Minni Minawi, and by others.) He recalled the threat by Usama Bin Laden earlier in the year warning of jihad should UN peace-keepers go to Darfur, and he was sure that Al Qaeda would attack UN peace-keepers if they were deployed. He was confident that the Sudanese government's own plan was the best for Darfur.

¶5. CDA Hume said that the USG was equally firm in its own

support of transition from AU peace-keeping to a UN operation. As the Secretary had said to FM Lam Akol a week earlier, the USG called on the Sudanese government to accept a UN peace-keeping mission in Darfur; should it reject such a mission there could be no development of the bilateral relationship, which was likely to deteriorate. Hume explained that the USG position was hardening on this point, as was likely to be soon evident. Despite this direct disagreement, both sides wanted peace and security for Darfur.

¶ 6. Hume said that after the DPA was signed, the two main problems were the decision by Abdul Wahid and others not to sign the agreement and the weakness of the AU peace-keeping operation. The USG had worked, albeit with little success, to get additional adherants to the DPA, and it was still active in this direction. The need for broader support for the DPA was something that the USG and the Sudanese government agreed on, despite their disagreement on peace-keeping. Without ignoring their deadlock on the peace-keeping question, perhaps the two sides could still work on securing support from DPA non-signatories. As for peace-keeping, the Sudanese government position, including offensive military operations, precluded compliance with the DPA and any active peacekeeping, even by the African Union. Moreover, the Sudanese government had blocked capacity of the kind recommended in the UN SYG's report to bolster AMIS (e.g. better communications, air mobility, and logistics). Simply extending AMIS would not solve those problems.

¶ 7. Noting that Ramadan would soon start, Hume asked if it might be possible for President Bashir to declare a moritorium on any offensive military action, creating an opportunity for renewed effort to secure support in Darfur for the DPA. Some non-signatory groups were interested in

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supporting the DPA, but they would not do so when confronted by an offensive. The Sudanese military might well suffer setbacks, and its plan might fail. A moritorium could provide an opportunity for the USG and other international partners to encourage broader support for the DPA. Should this effort be successful, the circumstances might be more favorable for solving the disagreement over UN peace-keeping.

¶ 8. Taha said this idea was attractive and that he would raise it with President Bashir as soon as he returned from New York. CDA Hume suggested that, in light of Bashir's upcoming speech to the UNGA and meetings in New York, perhaps Taha could raise it with Bashir before his return.

¶ 9. Comment: Taha is worried about the state of U.S./Sudanese relations, but he signalled that he does not want to be used as a conduit for messages challenging Bashir's rejection of UN peace-keeping. He wants a way out of the impasse, however, and, as a first step, he may well raise with Bashir the merits of declaring a Ramadan moritorium as a means to challenge the international community to address the problems raised by DPA non-signatories. End comment.

HUME